DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 403 493 CE 073 512

TITLE Team Building.
PUB DATE 96
NOTE 26p.; In: Academy of Human Resource Development (AHRD) Conference Proceedings (Minneapolis, MN, February 29-March 3, 1996); see CE 073 480.
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Education; Case Studies; *Employee Attitudes; Empowerment; *Group Dynamics; Incentives; Industrial Training; *Labor Force Development; Manufacturing Industry; Organizational Change; Organizations (Groups); *Performance Technology; *Personnel Management; State Agencies; *Teamwork; Values; Work Attitudes

ABSTRACT

This document contains four papers presented at a symposium moderated by Allen Church at the 1996 conference of the Academy of Human Resource Development. "Teambuilding Intervention Strategy Development: A Case Study of Two Midwestern Manufacturing Industries" (Paul E. Brauchle, David W. Wright) discusses a qualitative case study of employee empowerment and team building success in two midwestern industries that used different methods of intervention strategy deployment. "Installing, Training, and Rewarding Teams with 'Pay for Knowledge': A Case Study" (Paul Hardt, Johan Haggstrom) presents the results of a study examining the team installation and supervisor training phases of the establishment of a "pay-for-knowledge" incentive system at a midwestern manufacturing facility. Toni Powell's paper "Perceptions of Self-Directed Work Team Members: The Big Picture" discusses the following themes, which were identified during a study of issues facing two self-directed work teams at a midsized manufacturing organization: management support, reward processes, member status, and cohesiveness. "Employee Perceptions of Employee and Organizational Values in a State Department of Corrections" (Jennifer Gail Parsons, William R. Venable, Michael Dee Parsons) discusses the results of in-depth interviews of 19 randomly selected corrections department employees regarding the relationship between personal and organizational values. Papers contain references. (MN)

**********
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
**********

ED 403 493

# SYMPOSIUM
# [31] TEAM BUILDING

**Chair: Allen Church, W.W. Burke Associates, Inc.**

**Teambuilding Intervention Strategy Deployment: A Case Study of Two Manufacturing Industries**
**Paul E. Brauchle, Illinois State University**
**David W. Wright, Illinois State University**

**Installing, Training, and Rewarding Teams with "Pay for Knowledge": A Case Study**
**Paul Hardt, Employers Association, Inc.**
**Johan Häggström, Tetra-Rex Packaging Systems, Inc.**

**Perceptions of Self-directed Work Team Members: The Big Picture**
**Toni Powell, Barry University**

**Employee Perceptions of Employee and Organizational Values in a State Department of Corrections**
**Jennifer Gail Parsons, Oklahoma State University**
**William R. Venable, Oklahoma State University**
**Michael Dee Parsons, Arcadia, Oklahoma**

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
PBrauchle, PHardt
TPowell, JParsons
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

**Academy of Human Resource Development**
**1996 Conference**
**Minneapolis, MN**
**February 29-March 3, 1996**

CE 033 512

# Teambuilding Intervention Strategy Deployment: A Case Study of Two Midwestern Manufacturing Industries

*Paul E. Brauchle*
*Illinois State University*

*David W. Wright*
*Illinois State University*

*A qualitative case study using the "Excellence" approach was used to investigate the differences, for midsized manufacturing industries, between those who experience marked success in implementing employee empowerment strategies and those who encounter considerable difficulty doing so. Results indicated that a consultant-based teambuilding intervention strategy with specific components can enhance a company's opportunity for success.*

Employee involvement is often seen as a desirable method of enhancing productivity and quality in an organization and is often implemented with various forms of work teams. Success has often been reported with this method ( Bersic, 1992; Berrey, Avergun, & Russ-Eft, 1993; Pinto, Pinto, & Prescott, 1993; Mueller, 1994; and Gemmill & Wilemon, 1994). However, one major shortcoming is that many employee involvement programs tend to be activity-centered (management-driven) rather than goal centered (consultant-based). Programs which are management-driven tend to be short lived and ineffective. One major difference between management-driven and consultant-based projects appears to be the developmental process by which they are implemented — the company's *intervention strategy deployment* method. Precise differences between successful and unsuccessful projects in terms of intervention strategy deployment have not yet been clearly established. This study hopes to clarify the reasons for differential results obtained in similar companies when the same approach is used under different managerial norms.

**Research Question:**

What are the differences for midsized industries between those who experience marked success in implementing employee empowerment strategies and teambuilding processes and those who encounter considerable difficulty in doing so?

**Methodology:**

A case study approach was used to investigate employee empowerment and teambuilding success in two midwest industries which used different methods of intervention strategy deployment. The companies had at least 10 significant characteristics in common. These included: (1) Similar size; (2) Geographic location in the midwest (the companies were less than 50 miles apart); (3) Both are market leaders in their fields; (4) Both serve mature markets; (5) They are

*© copyright, Paul E. Brauchle & David W. Wright, 1996*

developing new processes or products to remain competitive; (6) Both are quality conscious and are striving for ISO certification or the equivalent; (7) Both use labor-intensive processes for production; (8) A mixed gender work force and supervisory structure exists in both; (9) They are union shops; and (10) They previously tried worker empowerment intervention but were unsuccessful.

**Procedure:**

Different intervention strategy deployment methods were used in these industries (let's call them Company X and Company Y). Company X is a manufacturer of aftermarket parts (various types of sieves, chafers, and other parts) for combines. They also fabricate original equipment parts for new brand-name farm equipment that is assembled by large plants in the midwest. Company X used a management-driven intervention strategy deployment method. For example, after a failed attempt at employee empowerment, management totally reconstituted the planning and training committees. Although these committees had different membership, they retained the same names by which they had previously been known. When the consultants were brought in to assist with the employee empowerment effort, these committees dictated how, when, and to whom intervention strategies would be directed. They were seen by the workers not as groups of empowered workers, but as agents of management.

Company Y is a health technologies concern which produces custom orthotic devices for podiatrists and their patients. This company used an intervention strategy which was consultant-based. Because they had drawn a different lesson from experiencing failure, they opted to follow the consultants' advice concerning intervention strategy deployment from the initial contact throughout the process.

Very similar advice was given to both companies in the development of their empowerment process. This provided the consultants with an excellent opportunity to compare results. A ten step process ( Brauchle and Wright, 1993) was recommended to help develop functional and cross-functional teams in both plants. This procedure involves (1) Establishing credibility with the teams, (2) Allowing for ventilation of frustrations, (3) Providing an orientation to training procedures, (4) Getting the teams to invest in the process, (5) Helping them set group goals, (6) Facilitating the group development process, (7) Establishing intragroup procedures for conducting the business of the teams, (8) Establishing intergroup processes for communication with other teams and management, (9) Changing the role of the consultants, and (10) Ending the consultants' involvement.

The advice given to both organizations was consistent with that recommended by Wright & Brauchle (1994) in terms of a focus on achieving four major objectives: (1) Obtaining management support, (2) Establishing and training a Steering Committee, (3) Understanding the corporate culture, and (4) Setting realistic expectations.

Materials used to train the teams included the check sheet (Brauchle & Wright, 1995) which the authors have successfully used over a period of time with other firms. The use of the check sheet insured that the procedures used in training the teams were reasonably similar for both companies and that the training events occurred in similar sequences.

A qualitative excellence model (Peters & Waterman, 1982) was used to establish reference points for conducting the comparison between the two companies. The model used the eight criteria that Peters & Waterman had used to identify the best run American Companies: (1) A bias for action, (2) Staying close to the customer, (3) Autonomy and entrepeneurship, (4) Productivity through people, (5) Hands-on, value driven, (6) Stick to the knitting, (7) Simple form, lean staff , and (8) Simultaneous loose-tight properties.

We found that the two companies were very similar on four of these eight criteria, (#1, 2, 5, and 7). However, by the end of the study, the companies had manifested qualitative differences on the remaining four of the criteria (# 3, 4, 6, and 8). A discussion of those specific differences follows:

Criteria #3: Autonomy and entrepeneurship — When the project started, both manufacturers looked very similar in terms of the way their operations were allowed to run. In both cases, experimentation and innovation were not only accepted but were encouraged. Major decisions were made on site by both plants. However, late in this investigation the semi-autonomous status of company X was revoked by the parent company. The general manager was relieved of his duties and the parent company instituted stronger controls by naming an off-site manager who worked several days each week at the plant.

Criteria #4: Productivity through people — The companies were very different in terms of their gain-sharing programs and the involvement of the employees in the operation of the business. In company X, gain sharing was rolled out to the labor force by management. The company had promulgated a gain sharing plan which was not accepted by the workers and was not having the desired effect on productivity and morale. In company Y, cooperative effort that represents all levels was used to craft a gain sharing plan that everyone could accept. In fact, the Steering Committee of the empowerment effort was used because of its excellent company representation and personal reputation as the core of the group that worked on the gain sharing package.

Criteria #6: Stick to the knitting — Company Y, the orthotics company, continues to focus on craftsmanship with the products they know best by continuously improving the quality of those products and the processes for producing them. Company X, the farm implement manufacturer, has taken on an entirely new product line as required by the parent company, and is experiencing difficulties in producing the new product on time, on budget, and to specifications.

Criteria #8: Simultaneous loose-tight properties — Company wide involvement in constructing mission statements which incorporate the key values of the business are apparent *only* in company Y.

The consultants worked with both companies from the latter part of August 1995 to January, 1996 to enhance the deployment of their empowerment efforts. Approximately equal time was spent at each company, where the consultants usually worked one day per week and met with one or two groups during each visit. Occasionally the consultants conferred with management or HRD personnel at the sites, but most visits were with functional or cross functional teams. The goal in both organizations was to bring the governing or steering groups to a high state of effectiveness, improve the readiness of workers to accept the teambuilding intervention strategy deployment that the consultants recommended, and to organize and bring to acceptable levels of performance one or two functional and cross-functional teams in each location.

At the end of the four month time period, the relative success of teambuilding efforts was evaluated for both concerns in terms of perceived productivity of the teams, member satisfaction in both functional and cross-functional teams, willingness of members to assume key roles necessary to the effective functioning of a team (moderator, recorder, etc.), willingness to be trained, and positive attitudes towards the development of a gain-sharing plan.

**Results and Conclusions:**

As a result of this study, a number of conclusions seem appropriate in explaining similar midsized manufacturing industries that experience differential success in implementing employee empowerment programs.

Several differences presented themselves. In Company X, the management-driven intervention process yielded very mixed results. Team effectiveness, empowerment, support, and positive changes in the organizational culture were inconsistent with company and consultant expectations. Intervention efforts were often shifted by management from a training and development focus to a labor/management focus. The future of this intervention effort remains in doubt. These findings seem consistent with Mueller's (1994) observation that when companies design teams and the work they accomplish, they do so according to their organization's objectives, not according to a best model. By contrast, Company Y used the consultant-based

approach very nearly as recommended by the consultants. There the employees are truly involved in the process, which is proceeding on schedule and in a positive direction consentually determined by management, the work force, and newly developed work teams.

Three other specific conclusions seem appropriate:

1. When deploying a teambuilding intervention strategy, consultants should take great care to assure than management both supports and understands the process.

2. The consultant-based approach described for company Y seems clearly superior to the management-driven approach used by company X in terms of perceived productivity, member satisfaction, willingness of team members to assume key roles, willingness to be trained, and positive attitudes toward the development of a gain-sharing plan.

3. It seems clear that an effective teambuilding intervention strategy deployment is a comprehensive one which includes the following characteristics: (a) A high level of support and understanding from management; (b) Time commitment to empowering workers; (c) Involvement of significant cross-sectional groups of workers in planning the strategy; (d) Judicious use of a carefully selected steering committee; (e) Frequent meetings with upper management, HRD personnel, and key production workers; (f) A proactive rather than a reactive stance by teams and individual team members; and (g) Use of an organized and systematic method of developing team skills.

**Summary**

In the course of this research activity, the consultants wanted both companies to succeed in their teambuilding processes because it was in their professional interests to achieve the same degree of success with both clients. When the consultants agreed to assist these companies they believed there was promise for both. Nobody likes to fail; however, when results are less than anticipated an examination of those factors associated with failure can be instructive. Hence, the use of the "success" model for analysis.

Although this model has often been used to differentiate successful and unsuccessful companies by analyzing their procedures and practices, it has been used here to show that a consultant-based team building intervention strategy with specific components can enhance a company's opportunity for success.

**References:**

Berry, C., Avergun, A., & Russ-Eft, D. (1993). Highly responsive teams and your competitive advantage. Journal for Quality and Participation, 9, 72-76.

Brauchle, P. E., & Wright, D. W. (1993). Training work teams. Training and Development, 47, (3), 65-68.

Brauchle, P. E. & Wright, D. W. (1995). Using a checksheet as a guide for high involvement training. Performance and Instruction, 34, (3), 4-8.

Bursic, K. M. (1991). Strategies and benefits of the successful use of teams in manufacturing organizations. IEEE Transactions on Engineering Management, 39, (3), 277-288.

Gemmill, G., & Wilemon, D. (1994). The hidden side of leadership in technical team management. Research Technology Management, 37, (6), 25-32.

Mueller, F. (1994). Teams between hierarchy and commitment: Change strategies and the internal environment. Journal of Management Studies, 31, (3), 383-403.

Peters, T., & Waterman, R. (1982). In search of excellence. New York, New York: Harper & Row.

Pinto, M., Pinto, J., & Prescott, J. (1993). Antecedents and consequences of project team cross-functional cooperation. Management science, 39, (10), 1281-1297.

Wright, D. W. & Brauchle, P. E. (1994). Teaming up for quality. Training and Development, 48, (9), 67-73.

# Installing, Training, and Rewarding Teams with "Pay for Knowledge": A Case Study

*Paul Hardt*
*Employers Association, Inc. Minneapolis, MN*

*Johan Häggström*
*Tetra-Rex Packaging Systems, Inc. Minneapolis, MN*

*Case studies of "high involvement management" indicate installations of teams, pay for knowledge systems, and similar methods may go through several phases. This study describes the phases of an installation of teams and training of supervisors and team members in a manufacturing facility in the Midwest. An innovative "pay for knowledge" system is described. Barriers to success are identified, as well as results of the installation.*

Much has been written about "high involvement management" (e.g. Mohrman, Ledford, Lawler, & Mohrman, 1986; Pasmore, 1988; Lawler, 1992), its theoretical basis and its advantages and disadvantages. However, only a handful of case studies (e. g. Walton, 1975, Winter, 1977; Trist, Susman, & Brown, 1977; Poza & Markus, 1980, Winter; Manz, Keating, & Donnellon, 1990) have been written about implementing a high involvement management system- a system in which all systems (technical, human, information) are integrated to maximize employee involvement. Using Yin's (1994) guidelines for case studies, this paper addresses the research problem: "How can a wide variety of high involvement initiatives be successfully introduced into an organization which was formerly managed in a conventional way?" The theoretical framework supporting the change process described in this study is found in Lewin's (1951) description of driving and barrier forces which gather around an organization change effort. The unit of analysis for the study will be described and a time-series analysis, based on contemporary documentation, survey data, participant interviews, and documented results of group discussions will record the events in the installation. The study concludes with an examination of the preliminary results of the installation and a critique of the methods used in it.

The unit of analysis for this case study is the Production Department of Tetra-Rex Packaging Systems, Inc. of Minneapolis, MN. Tetra-Rex manufactures machines which fill and seal gable-top containers for the milk and juice market. Tetra-Rex is a division of Tetra-Pak, based in Lund, Sweden. Tetra-Rex has a total of 300 employees, with 125 assigned to the production department. The production department is headed by a production manager. At the beginning of this project, there were seven supervisors reporting to the production manager, as well as supervisors for various support functions. Each supervisor headed up a production line which manufactures one of four models of Tetra-Rex machines or a support function which supports the production lines.

## Case Studies of Previous High Involvement Installations

Five case studies have been found to be instructive in analyzing the events described in this study. The earliest relevant case studies examined were those of the installation of socio-technical methods in manufacturing companies (Walton, 1975, Winter, 1977). The units of analysis in the earlier study were eight firms- two from the United States, two from Canada, one in Great Britain, two in Norway, and one in Sweden. A pet food plant was the unit of analysis in the 1977 study. Walton is not explicit about his methods in either study, however it appears he used a combination of his own direct experience with some of the cases, as well as an examination of case documents about. Walton found a general, seven-step model in the installation process in the 1975 study: 1) initiation of the pilot experiment, 2) pilot experiment declared a success, 3) recognition and resources provided for further work restructuring, 4) more general interest in work restructuring aroused, 5) change agents' interventions extend throughout the corporate system, 6) facilitative

©*P. Hardt and J. Häggström, 1996*

networks developed, and 7) personnel movement occurs (those who fit into the new system stay, those who do not fit move on). He found five phases in the pet food installation: 1) pre-start up (design of social and technical systems before plan is implemented), 2) technical/social start-up (employees are hired and trained, technical systems are installed according to project design), 3) pushing the technology (emphasis placed on increased productivity at the expense of social needs), 4) turmoil, decline, and reversal (conflict, "storming" within and between teams), 5) steady state with traces of erosion. Walton concluded that significant barriers arise to prevent the diffusion of high involvement methods from a pilot installation to an entire organization: regression in the pilot, a poor model for change is used in the installation process, confusion exists over what is to be diffused, deficient implementation methods are used, lack of top management commitment, inappropriateness of concepts employed, union opposition, bureaucratic barriers, threatened obsolescence (middle managers fear being laid off), self-limiting dynamics (pilots seal themselves off from the rest of the organization).

Trist, Susman, and Brown (1977) published an extensive case study of the installation of socio-technical methods in American mines. The unit of analysis was two experimental sections of two unionized mines. The research team used personal observation and documentary evidence to chronicle the case. They observed these phases: 1) creation of labor/management steering committee, 2) selection and training of autonomous section members, 3) socio-technical analysis of sections, while work crews worked under new system, 4) extending autonomy to the mine as a whole, 5) initiatives after vote by union to stop experiment. The research team documented these results of the initial experiments: safety improved, accidents were reduced, absenteeism went down, costs of production were reduced, attitudes improved. Productivity was not found to be significantly improved in the experimental installations.

In response to Walton's article describing barriers to the extension of high involvement methods beyond pilots, Poza and Markus (1980, Winter) described the installation of teams and other high involvement methods in a paint plant in 1977. The authors are not explicit about their methods of documentation, but it appears they relied on personal observation and documentary evidence they collected. The unit of analysis was a 1,400 employee plant which manufactured paint for the automotive aftermarket. Within this plant, work flow had been redesigned following socio-technical principles, the organization chart had been "flattened," teams had been established, and employee compensation had been redesigned to encourage "learn and earn." The authors found these phases: 1) recruitment and selection of new employees, 2) orientation and training in new methods, and 3) team building. Results of the installation were reported as: better team coordination, increased sense of responsibility to plant objectives, and improved problem-solving. Operational improvements included reduced payroll costs through reduced headcount, reduced absenteeism, productivity improvement, and improved quality.

Most recently, Manz, Keating, and Donnellon (1990) reported their experience introducing employee involvement methods and the effect of this project on mid-level supervisors and managers. The unit of analysis was a non-union wholesale distributor and retailer of architectural, engineering, and commercial art supplies and furnishings. The authors state explicitly that their methods for data gathering included consultant observation, multiple interviews and discussions, and video tapes of key interactions. Four "themes" appeared: 1) initial suspicion, uncertainty, and resistance, 2) gradual realization of the positive possibilities in the new work system, 3) wrestling with a new role, and 4) learning a new language.The authors concluded that the resistance exhibited by mid-level managers to a transition to self-managing work teams stems from factors similar to those identified by Walton- fear of threatened obsolescence.

## Sequence of Events

As the above studies illustrate, while there may be certain stages of implementation common to high involvement installations, each project is unique. The phases of this installation are described below, as well as similarities and differences between this installation and the ones cited above.

***Phase I- Consideration of pros and cons of teams and "pay for knowledge" (February, 1994).*** The secondary author was appointed as production manager of the production department in January, 1994. The Minneapolis Tetra-Rex facility had been managed in a conventional, hierarchical manner for the five years that Tetra-Pak had owned the facility. Upon appointment to his position, the production manager advised department supervisors

of his intention to make a transition to high involvement management, and he began to raise the awareness of supervisors about these methods. While a student the production manager studied high involvement methods, including numerous case studies of team installations in Japan, the United States, and Sweden. The production manager made a presentation on how employee involvement can be increased and how the role of supervisors will change. The production manager announced that all of the department's supervisors would attend a seminar in San Francisco in early April, 1994, to increase their awareness of high involvement methods and to gain tools they would need to install these methods at Tetra-Rex.

At the seminar, the supervisors heard presentations on teams and a "pay for knowledge" system. "Pay for knowledge" is defined as a reward system which "provides for payments to employees based on what they are capable of doing" (Lawler & Ledford, 1985). A pay for knowledge system supports high involvement, because employees are encouraged to seek personal development. The supervisors heard that a pay for knowledge system can yield many benefits, including: increased work force flexibility, improved product/service quality, higher organizational flexibility, greater customer awareness, and increased employee motivation to grow on the job. The supervisors also heard about problems associated with pay for knowledge systems: increased compensation costs, increased training costs, employees "top out" by reaching a point where they can not receive any more training, and increased administrative complexities.

After attending the seminar, the production manager posed the question to each supervisor- "Do you want to be a part of this change?" Each supervisor said they did. The production manager then undertook to inform the entire Minneapolis organization- departments within his control and departments out of his control- about the why, when, and how of the changes that would be taking place in the production department. It was also announced that the supervisors would be leading the change effort- they would be part of deciding how changes would be made in the department and then their people would be informed of the changes. While the supervisors were being developed to take on new responsibilities as team leaders, their employees would be developing in a parallel course to take on duties the supervisors had formerly carried out.

***Phase II- Assessment of organization readiness (mid-April, 1994 to July, 1994).*** At the San Francisco seminar, the supervisors learned of the Assessing Organizational Readiness tool (1985). This survey examines a number of factors, including: confidence and trust shown by boss, freedom to talk about job, encouragement for innovation, motivational approaches (fear, threat, punishment, rewards, involvement), personal ownership in organizational goals, present level of team work, information flow and acceptance of downward communication. The assessment was given to all employees in the production department and work area and department-wide results were calculated. Generally, the assessment results showed that the department, as a whole, was not ready for wide-scale implementation of employee involvement. An action plan was developed by the management team to address several issues raised by the survey results. The management team also decided at this time to delay the installation of the pay for knowledge system, until the barriers to employee involvement could be addressed.

***Phase III- Pilot installations (April, 1994 to late 1994).*** While the department-wide results indicated lack of readiness for the planned change, some departments did show some readiness. Based on three criteria: survey results showing readiness for change, supervisor willingness, and urgency of need for improvement- three departments established teams. From early 1994 to late that year, supervisors of three work areas structured teams in their departments. These attempts at team structure became pilot projects for the department. All supervisors in the production department briefed their work groups on participative decision-making, and started to share decision-making on work-flow, scheduling, and some personnel issues.

*Changing roles and responsibilities.* As the pilot projects progressed, roles and responsibilities of supervisors and employees shifted. For supervisors, administrative responsibilities, which were formerly reserved to the production manager, were delegated downward, including budgeting and planning for training of their people. Supervisors were expected to facilitate the setting of department objectives, the scheduling of work, and forward planning. In addition, supervisors were expected to lead process improvement projects. Supervisors were also charged with serving as deputies for the production manager, and to integrate the efforts of their departments with out-of-department entities. Throughout this transition, supervisors were expected to involve employees in department decisions. Employees were expected to take on some

of the responsibilities which had been formerly reserved for their supervisors, including setting their own production and personal development objectives and participating in department improvement meetings. The flow of information to employees about operations, finances, sales, customer feedback, and new product development was increased. Minutes of production department meetings were distributed throughout the department to help employees understand where the department stood on its schedules and planning. While cross-training was encouraged throughout the department, only pilot teams actually implemented it.

*Realization of barriers to wider implementation.* As the pilot installations progressed, there were signs pointing to success. First, there was a higher level of motivation in teams in areas which needed "fixing," thus confirming this as a criteria for setting up teams in these areas. Second, new hires who had not been acculturated under the old management system were more open to the new system. Third, when employees were given opportunities to set their own goals, and run their own improvement projects, pilot teams responded more positively. Finally, if employees were openly encouraged to try new approaches, the teams seemed to respond more positively.

Systemic barriers also arose to prevent the wider implementation of employee involvement methods from pilot projects to the whole department. These barriers included "pilot vs. non-pilot" conflict. While members of pilot teams felt pride in their progress toward self-management, non-pilot employees said, "This will never work here. We don't need this here." Such conflicts were also seen between pilot and non-pilot supervisors. Similarly, conflicts between pilot teams and other departments of the company were also seen. Since pilot teams were being held more directly accountable for team results, they were insistent that quality parts and components be provided to them. Those departments providing parts to the teams were sometimes resentful of having production workers tell them about the delayed or poor quality of parts. Corrective Action Teams were established to make links between the production department and other departments, but these teams did not succeed. In addition, because of Tetra-Rex' history of "revolving door" management, some employees were heard to say, "This is Johan's (the production manager's) program. What happens when he leaves? Is this the 'management flavor of the month.'" Finally, there was a lack of upper management support for wider implementation of employee involvement. In December, 1994, the production manager determined that the department and its supervisors needed additional tools to make this project work, so he contacted the primary author for assistance.

***Phase IV- Assessment of training needs/Development of pay for knowledge (February, 1995 to October, 1995).*** The primary author recommended to the production manager that an in-depth assessment should be conducted of organization readiness for employee involvement. This recommendation was accepted by the production manager. An in-depth assessment began in February, 1995. Three sources of data were used: work observation, interviews, and surveys. The assessment was based on a model of team work effectiveness developed by the primary author (see Figure 1). The assessment examined work structure (variety, significance, autonomy, feedback, identity, based on Hackman & Oldham, 1980) , team structure, relationships, problem-solving, conflict resolution, and regeneration/transformation. Based on this assessment, recommendations were made including establishing a Steering Committee to guide the work of the Corrective Action Teams and coordinate their efforts with the production teams; training for supervisors on team skills and concepts, including: Why Teams?, Group Processes (Bormann & Bormann, 1976; Tuckman, 1965) Communication Barriers, Problem-solving (Isaaksen & Treffinger ,1985), Leadership (Myers, 1962; Shutz, 1968), and Conflict Resolution Skills (Fisher & Ury, 1981); and, finally, after supervisors have received this training, they should receive first-line leader assessment and training. The topics would include: Assessment of First-line Leader Skills (Hardt, 1994), Boundary Management Skills, Empowerment and Authority, Interviewing and Selection of the "New Worker," Training and Orientation, Motivation, Mentoring and Coaching, Appraising Performance Using 360° Feedback, Personal Development Planning.

While the team assessment was being conducted, the pay for knowledge system was being developed. The Employers Association was contacted for help in installing this system, which had been put "on hold" since April, 1994. Lynn Ribble, staff consultant for Employers Association, was the lead consultant on this aspect of the project. Following steps similar to those suggested by Lawler and Ledford (1985) and Schuster and Zingheim (1992), employees were first involved in listing tasks that were performed to assemble and test a machine. When all tasks were identified, employees were surveyed to determine the relative difficulty, complexity, and impact of the tasks



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Figure 1- Model for Successful Teams.

on the production process. Functional task lists were developed for assembly, warehouse, subassembly, and support shop areas. Besides these functional lists, team- oriented lists were also developed, including "team work" and "work ethic." These lists were eventually used as part of the peer review system. All lists were validated by panels of experts, who examined the employee survey results, and finalized the task lists. Finally, an administrative support system and Pay for Knowledge Manual were developed to facilitate the implementation of the system.

***Phase V- Department-wide implementation of teams (March, 1995 to July, 1995).*** The department-wide implementation of teams and pay for knowledge started in March, 1995, and can be divided into four elements:

*Supervisor training.* Following the recommendations of March, 1995, the eight supervisors and the production manager all went through two rounds of training- team training and first-line leader training- between March and August, 1995.

*Force-field sessions.* For those production groups which had not been working in a team structure, the introduction of this approach meant change and some resistance. To help these groups understand why this change was being introduced and how it would benefit them and the organization as a whole, it was decided that "force field" sessions should be done. These sessions consisted of the lead consultant for the team-installation side of the project explaining the principle of force field analysis (Lewin, 1951). A force field diagram was drawn on a white board, and session participants were encouraged to list some of the driving and barrier forces that the employees thought were being brought to bear on Tetra-Rex to change its work structure. Session attendees generally responded positively to these sessions.

*Team training.* Three rounds of team training were conducted between July and October, 1995. The first round of training involved three production departments, and included topics recommended in the most recent assessment. Teams used this training to generate problem-solving projects. After this round, feedback from participants and supervisors prompted the shortening of the next round of training to five sessions. This format for team training was presented to two groups of approximately 25 participants each, between September and November, 1995. A supervisor was a co-instructor for the last group of trainees, and teams continued to do problem-solving projects.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

*Pay for knowledge system.* The pay for knowledge system was finalized in early fall, 1995. The system was set up to facilitate a cultural shift from the old "pay for seniority" system to a new value system, which encouraged the acquisition and sharing of new knowledge. The system was established with these principles: the system must be structured, so everyone understands it and so there is no "cutting of corners." The system must be made visible, understandable, fair, and must provide an incentive to train oneself and train others. As the system took shape, it was decided that there would be no recognition of seniority, a shift that would require a major change in attitude for many workers. Under the system, workers would be paid for the number and variety of skills they could exhibit. As part of carrying out the principles of the system, peer evaluation was made a part of it. Team members would be evaluated on objective criteria relating to performance of job skills, as well as more subjective criteria, highlighting member-to-member relations and "work ethic." A Code of Conduct was instituted to encourage the fair, even-handed treatment of all team members.

Using the Pay for Knowledge Manual, initial skill assessments of all production employees were conducted in October, 1995. Based on these skills assessments, employees were assigned to new pay classifications. While there were some employees who were unhappy with their reclassifications, generally, employees accepted the system. Peer reviews of three skill areas- teamwork, housekeeping/safety, and work habits- were also conducted at this time. As the system rolled out, four issues emerged. First, some workers were assessed as being overpaid, based on their skills. Conversely, some employees were assessed as underpaid, based on seniority and their skills. Inequities caused some friction and resistance to the new system. Employees, who had been members of teams, were ahead of their non-team peers as measured by the system. Second, team members raised the issue of where they should put their priorities- on training each other or shipping machines. Similarly, a third issue arose. Some team members questioned the fact that if they spent time teaching others their skills, they could not spend this time learning new skills themselves. Finally, lack of resources from the internal human resources department was a barrier. As team members were assessed, they became aware of their training needs. However, the internal human resource department was not positioned to support the meeting of their needs. The production department leadership realized that basic human resource policies (e.g. attendance, tardiness, other codes of conduct) were needed to make the pay for knowledge system work.

***Phase VI- Regeneration and transformation (July to December, 1995).*** The "lessons learned" from this installation can be divided into three categories: training results, organizational results, and transformations. Swanson and Sleezer's (1987) Training Effectiveness Evaluation (TEE) method was used as the basis for evaluating *training results.* First, the *professionalism* of the training was evaluated in some training sessions. The training received ratings in the range of "good" to "very good." Comments from participants were generally positive. Evaluation of this nature was done selectively, because the first two groups to go through this training were so resistant to the transition, it was felt that such an evaluation would not yield valid results. Supervisors of the first two training groups were interviewed after the training, and they indicated that the training was received "as well as could be expected, considering the attitude of the participants." The meeting of *training objectives* was evaluated by assigning each team to develop a problem-solving project to present at the end of the course to the production manager. Examples of these projects included: installation of improved compressed air delivery system, improvement of various component systems (e.g. machine labeling, "chiller" units, electrical cabinets), improvements in documentation of instructions and work procedures, redesign of compactor for crushing test packages, redesign of equipment and tools used in assembly of machines. The ability to develop these projects provided ample support that learning objectives were substantially met.

*Organizational results.* Since June, 1994, lead times have been reduced by 50%, and there has been a 40% reduction in assembly hours. Besides these concrete operational results, less concrete, but nonetheless significant operational improvements were realized, including an explosion in cross-training, and an improvement in involvement and participation through an increase in suggestions for improvement. Additionally, there are now "working" cross-functional teams, with team members who are running meetings when supervisors are not present. These meetings have improved in efficiency. There has been a marked increase in "boundary management" activities- efforts to resolve conflicts within and between teams. Supervisors are being used to improve the productivity of the department through these efforts. Employees are working at higher levels of authority, and they are working on higher levels of problem-solving.

A common language for problem-solving has been adopted, and, as a result, consensus is reached more quickly. Peer pressure to improve and participate has been detected. Peer to peer coaching and feedback has been encouraged. There has been an increased focus throughout the department on important, but not urgent issues. All team members put their names on the machines they are building, indicating an improvement in quality and pride in workmanship, and teams can stop delivery of a machine if the quality is not up to team standards. Finally, there is an increased awareness of the "big picture." Team members are taking field trips to customer sites, and there is a greater awareness of other functions, because of the increased integration of support departments (e.g. purchasing, planning) into the production department.

*Transformations*. Since the conclusion of the final round of training and the implementation of the pay for knowledge system, a number of transformations have been undertaken in the production department to further the goal of increased employee involvement. Departments have been merged to facilitate more integration of functions. As a result of this transformation, support functions are better able to help teams. The number of supervisors has been reduced from 7 to 4. This is part of an effort to shift more responsibility to teams and reduce the direct involvement of supervisors in team activities. A new role- production trainer- has been introduced to help teams address some of the "teach vs. learn" conflicts cited above, as well as improve the quality of training, develop certification procedures for the pay for knowledge system, and improve workmanship. Workers are being encouraged to take on higher levels of authority. A Manufacturing Steering Committee has been established to coordinate the activities of teams. Information-sharing, which started early in the installation, is accelerating as layers of bureaucracy are stripped away. A Steering Committee meets monthly with department employees to share information.

In the context of these transformations, the production department continues to grapple with three transition issues. First, the issue of "How much empowerment do employees really have?" has been discussed extensively. Some employees have high expectations and act independently on these expectations. The Steering Committee and production manager continue to retain significant levels of authority. This disparity between expectations and reality is a source of conflict. Second, the pay for knowledge system needs to be supplemented with an incentive based on department performance to encourage teams to help other teams. Finally, barriers between the production department and other departments continue to prevent optimum coordination.

## Final Thoughts

The value of this case study lies in two areas. First, the case validated several factors observed in previous high involvement installations. Walton's (1975, Winter) barriers to the successful diffusion of teams were directly observed. For example, the barrier of "lack of top management support" was validated through positive and negative examples. Because plant management did not declare empowerment as strategically important, there were many barriers to diffusing teams in other, non-production departments. Conversely, because the production manager had considerable authority within his department, and he did support the principles of the installation, the diffusion of the team structure from pilots to the whole department was successful. Bureaucratic barriers between functional departments were also directly observed. The model of team-building used in this case (see Figure 1) and the competencies for first-line leaders (Hardt, 1994) were validated by the experience of teams and their leaders. Training offered in this installation, and based on these models, was found beneficial by participants and management. Hackman and Oldham's work motivation factors were observed as being very active in this installation, and were good indicators of the motivational power of the work to pull teams together. The need for a champion to push the transition effort was also confirmed.

Second, the case illustrated the interactive effects of systems on each other as organization change is attempted. The empowering of employees through teams would not have been as successful as it was without a pay for knowledge system to give incentive to employees to work in this system. Technical system improvements were intrinsically linked with social system improvements. As the production department progressed through the change process, its structure was molded to make it more flow-oriented, in contrast to its former more functional orientation. Much of the department's success in reducing lead times and assembly hours can be attributed to this restructuring, as well as system improvements. At the same time, department restructuring

gave teams a better chance to succeed. The dependence of both sides of the socio-technical equation on each other was manifested in the roles played by the two authors- one pushing the technical side, the other the social side. In this seesaw effort, mutual respect, openness, trust, and acceptance were indispensable in maintaining a balanced perspective on the question of what strategies would be most effective in facilitating the change process. When a client and outside change agent have such a balanced relationship, they can model a process of dialogue and consensus-building that can help the whole organization move through the phases of a high involvement installation.

**References**


Bormann, E., G., & Bormann, N. C. (1976). Effective small group communications (2nd ed.). Minneapolis, MN: Burgess Publishing Company.

_____ (1985). Assessing organizational readiness. Williamsville, NY: George Truell and Associates.

Fisher, R., & Ury, W. (1981). Getting to yes. New York: Penguin Books.

Hardt, P. O. (1994). Identification and validation of competencies of first-line leaders in high involvement organizations. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota.

Hackman, J. R., & Oldham, G. R. (1980). Work redesign. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Isaaksen, S. G., & Treffinger, D. J. (1985). Creative problem solving: the basic course. Buffalo, NY: Bearly Limited.

Lawler, E. E. (1971). Pay and organizational effectiveness: a psychological view. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Lawler, E. E. (1992). The ultimate advantage: creating the high involvement organization. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Lawler, E. E., & Ledford, G. E. (1985). Skill based pay: a concept that's catching on. Compensation and Benefits Review, 18(1), 54-61.

Lewin, K. (1951). Field theory in social science: selected theoretical papers. D. Cartwright (Ed.). New York: Harper and Row.

Manz, C. C., Keating, D. E., & Donnellon, A. (1990). Preparing for an organizational change to employee self-management: the managerial transition. Organizational Dynamics, 19(2), 15-26.

Mohrman, S. A., Ledford, G. E., Lawler, E. E., & Mohrman, A. (1986). Quality of worklife and employee involvement. In C. L. Cooper and I. Robertson (Eds.) International review of industrial and organizational psychology, (pp. 189-216). New York: John Wiley and Sons.

Myers, I. (1962). Manual: the Myers-Briggs type indicator. Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologist Press.

Pasmore, W. D. (1988). Designing effective organizations: the socio-technical systems perspective. New York: John Wiley and Sons.

Poza, E. J., & Markus, M. L. (1980, Winter). Success story: the team approach to work restructuring. Organizational Dynamics, pp. 3-25.

Schuster, J. R., & Zingheim, P. K. (1992). The new pay: linking employee and organizational performance. New York: Macmillan.

Schutz, W. (1968). The interpersonal underworld. Palo Alto, CA: Science and Behavior Books.

Swanson, R.A., Sleezer, C.M. (1987). Training effectiveness evaluation. Journal of European Industrial Training, 11(4), 7-15.

Trist, E. L., Susman, G. I., & Brown, G. R. (1977). An experiment in autonomous working in an American underground coal mine. Human Relations, 30(3), 201-236.

Tuckman, B. W. (1965). Development sequence in small groups. Psychological Bulletin, 63(6).

Walton, R. E. (1975, Winter). Explaining why success didn't take. Organizational Dynamics, pp. 3-22.

Walton, R. E.(1977). Work innovations at Topeka: after six years. Journal of Applied Behavioral Sciences, 13(3), 422-433.

Yin, R. K. (1994). Case study research: design and methods (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

# Perceptions of Self-directed Work Team Members: The Big Picture

*Toni Powell*
*Barry University*

*In an effort to understand some of the issues facing self-directed work teams from an internal, rather than external perspective, this study used observations and interviews to examine the impact of the SDWT experience on work team members at a mid-sized manufacturing organization. Using an inductive analysis of the interview data, four common themes emerged, providing a holistic picture of the concerns of two SDWTs. The study identified these themes as management support, reward processes, member status and cohesiveness. The paper concludes with a discussion of these themes.*

As a result of increasing global competition, a growing number of U.S. organizations are using self-directed work teams as a means for increasing productivity by empowering workers. Although some companies have reportedly been quite successful in this venture, many more have faced innumerable obstacles in developing functional, autonomous teams. A number of research studies conducted during the past few years have examined such team variables as communication and heterogeneity (Pearce and Ravlin, 1987), reward systems (Magjuka and Baldwin, 1991), interpersonal competence (Gooley, 1993) and corporate culture (Beer, Eisenstat and Spector, 1990) to determine the conditions necessary for cultivating successful self-directed work teams (SDWT).

Rather than isolating specific factors, this study was designed to examine important team issues from the participants' point of view. In so doing, the researcher anticipated that team members, through their interpretations of experiences they shared on SDWTs, would create a picture, or a series of patterns emerging, from their perceptions of the development of team structure and processes. This study, then, addressed these patterns, which were categorized by the researcher as management support, reward processes, member status and cohesiveness.

## Theoretical Framework

The foundation for this study was grounded in three related research areas. The first, systems theory, evolved from von Bertalanffy's System Theory (Passmore, 1988), Morgan's Open System Theory (1986) and Mink's Open Organizational Model (1979). Systems theory describes and analyzes the relationship between the nature of an organization and its environment, the individual and the work group. Open systems design models suggest that today's organization must create a work environment that allows workers to "experience, reflect, learn and grow" (Mink, Mink, Downes and Owen, 1994, p.14). Mink (1994) characterizes open organizations, as opposed to bureaucratic systems, as focused on creating commitment and achieving goals through collaboration. Obviously a natural outgrowth of the contemporary interest in open organizations, then, is the self-directed work team, where collaboration and participation are considered essential components of employee commitment.

The second area of research is the group of studies that examines team-based involvement structures. Hackman's (1986) findings suggest the complexity of studying work teams; among other conclusions, for example, determined that when organizations provided work teams with increased task interdependence, the potential grew for either greater success or failure. They concluded that there was no guarantee that teams would achieve their desired goals with the simple inclusion or exclusion of one or two variables. In fact, there were probably a number of additional factors, internal and external, influencing the team process.

© *copyright, Dr. Toni Powell, 1996*

Most pertinent for this study was the research exploring the problems unique to self-directed work teams (Manz and Sims, Jr., 1987; Manz and Angle, 1986; Poza and Markus, 1980). Pearce and Ravlen (1987) traced its origin to England's Tavistock Institute, where socio-technical systems theory was pioneered and suggested that the current use of SDWTs in organizations serves as a "work-related form of self-determination" (p.752). They reviewed earlier studies which identified a variety of distinguishing characteristics and concluded that at least three preconditions for successful SDWTs existed. The first (1) was that the task be perceived by the team as a whole piece of work involving multiple skills. Secondly, (2) conditions within the organization had to be supportive toward SDWTs, and the third (3) stressed the importance of training in order that team members be prepared for the increased autonomy and responsibility that membership in SDWTs entailed (Pearce and Ravlen, 1987). These three pre-conditions strongly supported the findings of this study.

**Research Questions**

Initially, some of the research questions guiding this study were focused, somewhat, on individual member variables such as: "Are there personality traits or family experiences common among functional SDWT members? How do SDWT members handle conflict? How do SDWT members perceive the impact of cultural and ethnic diversity on the productivity of the team? Also, because the organization in which the SDWTs work employed a large number of Hispanics, one of the original questions was: "How do SDWT members perceive the impact of cultural and ethnic diversity on the productivity of the team?" However, after the observations and interviews were completed, some new questions emerged as more significant for the purposes of this study. These were: "How do SDWT members value power in their work lives? What are the members' understanding of how their team impacts on the department? How has the SDWT experience affected members' attitudes toward their jobs and the organization?"

**Participants**

This study took place in two of several semi-independent divisions of a mid-sized global organization that manufactures blood analysis instruments. The company's headquarters are located in South Florida, where a large percent of the work population is Hispanic. This organization's employees accurately reflect South Florida's ethnic population. The company's organizational structure is relatively flat which eased its moved from a traditional management-led culture to that of a team-based culture during the past few years. Many of the floor workers in the manufacturing units have participated in the team-member and team-leader training offered by the organization's trainers throughout the year; some managers have also attended the team-facilitator training in an effort to smooth the transition as they move away from their traditionally supervisory roles to that of coaches and advisors. Many managers, however, have not participated in either team leader or team facilitator training.

The two teams involved in the study were intact work units. Most of the team members were technicians; a few were engineers. The two teams performed different functions in the manufacturing process; therefore, there was some variation in team size and job titles between the two teams.

**Methodology**

Since this study was designed to examine the impact of the SDWT experience on team members, a qualitative study design was used. First, a review of relevant team literature was made to understand previous research, theory and current practice and to provide a through grounding in conceptualizing the problem.

Secondly, team facilitators identified two work teams to the researcher as either self-directed, or in the transitional process of becoming prepared to be self-directed. The organization adapted Orsburn, Moran, Musselwhite and Zenger's (1990) definition of a self-directed work team as a highly trained group of employees, from six to eighteen, fully responsible for turning out a well-defined segment of finished work.

It plans, sets priorities, organizes, coordinates with others, measures and takes corrective action--all once considered the exclusive province of supervisors and managers. It solves problems, schedules and assigns work.

Each of these teams worked in separate divisions of the organization. Members of both teams were primarily Hispanic in ethnic origin; one, however, reflected significantly more ethnic diversity than the other. The first one, a team of seven members, will be identified as "Gamma" for the purposes of this study. This team was perceived as relatively mature by management because it was meeting the goals it set within the established time line, with clear boundaries established between team members and other department workers. The second, "Kappa," was perceived as immature, or in a transitional stage. This team, comprised of sixteen members, among whom was the department's manager, was described as less able to set realistic goals and had relatively unclear boundaries between the team and other department workers.

***Data Collection***. Data collection procedures included observations of team meetings and interviews with the members, facilitators and one team trainer.

During the observation phase, the researcher attended several meetings of the Gamma and Kappa teams. She noticed two clear differences among the two teams: (1) The Gamma team, consisting of seven members, had nearly perfect attendance. On most occasions when a member would be absent, the facilitator explained that the employee had been assigned to another area of the division temporarily, as trouble-shooter. Since each of the members of this team had unique work backgrounds and skills, each of them was needed, occasionally, to assist on special projects. In contrast, the Kappa team meetings seldom had more than half of the team members present. In additional, only four of them sat around the conference table; the rest of them sat outside the small group, against the wall. During the three meetings observed by the researchers, none of the members sitting against the wall offered any comments. (2) During three of the seven Gamma team meetings observed, the facilitator/manager was invited to attend and did so. He said very little, participating only when asked for feedback after an issue had been resolved. The researcher noted, in contrast, that the manager of the Kappa team served as member, as well, and was one of the four team members around the conference table. This manager/member participated actively and appeared to this observer to be the leading decision maker on the team.

***Interview Data***. After completing the observations, the researcher scheduled and conducted the interviews. A standard open-ended interview format was used. From the experience with the interviews, an inductive analysis was used to identify common themes or categories of experience that existed among the Gamma and Kappa teams, and served to differentiate between the themes.

***Data Analysis***. The inductive analysis process uncovered four underlying themes which emerged from the observations and interviews with team members. These themes provided a snapshot, or holistic picture of the teams and their perceptions of the SDWT experience at the time of the study.

**Results of the Interviews/Discussion of Themes**

***Management support***: Members of the Gamma team reported feeling respected and trusted by management because the team was encouraged to make major decisions without management intervention. Several of the team members described how the team gradually shifted, over time, from a group of people waiting to be told what to do to one that knew it had to decide what to do without outside intervention. This process occurred, they suggested, not only because of the absence of any supervisor or boss at their team meetings but also because the managers were never in their offices when team members would try to solicit advice. The team felt much frustration and anxiety in the early days of the team's development but as the team members began to realize that their mistakes would not be punished and that team decision-making would be supported, they began to become bolder and riskier. As one of the Gamma team members reported: "You don't hear things like 'this isn't my job' anymore. Now the members think that all of it is their job." Nearly all of the members mentioned that they understood the "big picture' better due, in part, to their enhanced decision making roles. Statements such as "we're part of something now", "now we get to say what's going on" and "now we get to tell them what has to be changed" indicate the sense of pride and accomplishment this team has in its work. These shared perceptions also point to the sense of empowerment that apparently accompanies their understanding of the big picture. Several members reported feeling greater power and influence, words that are often used

to describe empowerment.

In contrast, Kappa team members reported that after being told they were empowered to make decisions, they were then reminded that the division policy to "consult" their manager before making any actual decision was still in effect. Recently, the Kappa team was scheduled to make a presentation for a manufacturing association's regional conference. In an effort to improve the team's enthusiasm for presenting, managers from the Gamma team's division offered to take the members out to lunch at a nearby hotel prior to the presentation. Kappa team's managers, however, refused to allow them the time necessary to accept this invitation. "This group has always been slapped down by management," one member said. As a result of this apparent lack of support, team members reported feeling that management had no trust in team effort. "So why try?" asked another member.

***Cohesiveness:*** One clear difference between the two teams lay in the members' use of "we" or "I" in talking about their team experiences. In interviewing Gamma team members, the researcher noted that the pronoun "we" was always used. One interesting observation made by several of the Gamma team members was that they felt they "owned" and were made richer by the myriad of cultural and ethnic backgrounds represented among team members. Although the majority of the members were Hispanic; one was Arabic, another member was West Indian, and one was African-American. " We're a regular U.N. here," one member said proudly. Another, in discussing how they handle conflict, explained that "Because we come from different backgrounds, we don't expect to see the world the same way. So we have to listen real careful to understand each other. Now, I guess you could say we all do see the world the same way...at least at work." Several members of this team described their team as a "family." One member joked that "this family doesn't look very much alike but we probably think more alike than a normal family." All of the team members used phrases such as "sharing knowledge" and "support each other" and "getting along so that the team can get ahead."

The Kappa team members, all of whom were Hispanic, used "I" rather than "we" throughout the interviews. Due to the nature of their work, many of this team's members historically were required to troubleshoot on entire systems, rather than on sections or pieces of the system. Consequently, they had learned to take great pride in their individual accomplishments. It was obviously quite difficult, as several reported, to make the transition from feeling pride in their individual efforts to that taking collective pride in the team's success. In fact, two of the members said they believed that this division's norms clearly had served as barriers to developing cohesiveness in the team. Even with the recent encouragement and support of other division managers, Kappa team members report that a sense of "groupness" in this division is absent.

***Member status.*** The Gamma team manager serves as facilitator and consultant to this team. He does not attend team meetings unless invited and is not part of the decision making process. Several members of the Gamma team pointed to the sense of accomplishment they felt at being able to solve tasks and reach the team's goal without the manager's input. "In fact," one pointed out proudly, "we really know more about the job than he does. Why shouldn't we decide how it's going to be done?" Related to the perceived sense of family reported by this team, members appears to think of their manager/facilitator as one of the family members--but as more of a brother or cousin than a parent.

On the Kappa team, the manager is also a member of the team, equal, theoretically, in status to the other members. Although he reported that he was "just another member," many of the other team members reported feeling pressured to support the manager's position on decisions that were made, regardless of their own views. One example is the decision to have a sixteen-member team, a number far exceeding that recommended by the organization's SDWT trainers and advisors. Two team members reported that they believed this decision was made solely by the manager, although the division was told it was a team decision. "But people feel so much pressure and friction when they know that he (the manager) wants a certain thing, that they can't be open like you want them to be open. And whenever you have to get a consensus, everybody will try to go at the beginning with what that guy {the manager} said. If you think he's going to say yes, then you say yes. And then everybody's saying yes. And then {laughter} democracy wins."

***Reward System.*** When asked how to measure the "success" of their team, the Gamma team members pointed with pride to their participation in several regional manufacturing association presentations and to their recognition at award ceremonies. In addition, the team has received several bonuses for its efforts in developing a new procedure or process. Members pointed to the emphasis placed, in performance appraisals, on being a member of a successful team. Several members stated that they knew that being

a member of a productive team was considered vital to promotion and salary increase opportunities. In fact, one member said that the team's manager/facilitator was "on the fast track" primarily because he was able to move from the manager role to that of facilitator quickly and easily.

On the other hand, the Kappa team reported that they often felt they were competing with each other due, in part, to the departmental "daily work report" each member must submit which details his or her progress. Group members believe that only some of them can be rewarded; most of them, a couple member said, will be demoted or ignored. "Over there {Gamma team division} the whole department has a task and if the task gets done on time and right, then the whole department gets a bonus or a pat on the back or something. Here, everything is individual. If somebody else gets praised, then that means that I don't."

The Kappa team's daily work report is being phased out. Team members report that they know there are changes being made in the reward systems and that the current division goal statement specifies that team productivity be encouraged and rewarded. However, a few of the team members voiced concern over the ability of the team to change quickly enough to meet management' expectations. One member explained it this way: "They {the team members} remind me of a herd of zebras standing in a rainstorm after a drought. Even though they're surrounded by water they can't see it's raining. They have this idea that it's never gonna rain, so they'll die of thirst while they're standing in the water."

**References**


Beer, M., Eisenstat, R.W. & Spector, B (1990). The critical path to corporate renewal. Harvard Business School Review.

Gooley, T.B. (1993). Team spirit. Traffic Management, September, 145-165.

Hackman, J.R. (1987). The design of work teams. In J.W. Lorsch (Ed) Handbook of organizational behavior.

Magjuka, R.J. and Baldwin, T.T. (1991). Designing team based employee involvement programs in a continuing improvement environment: An empirical investigation. Human Resource Development Quarterly,2,(3) Fall, 207

Manz, C.C. & Angle, H. (1986). Can group self-management mean a loss of personal control: Triangulating on a paradox. Group and Organization Studies, 11, 309-334.

Manz, C.C. & Sims, H.P., Jr. (1987). Leading workers to lead themselves: The external leadership of self- managing teams. Administrative Science Quarterly,32,(1) 106-128.

Mink, O.G., Mink, B.P., Downes, E.A. and Owen, K.Q. (1994). Open organizations: A model for effectiveness,renewal and intelligent change. Jossey-Bass: San Francisco.

Mink, O.G., Shultz, J.M. & Mink, B.P. (1979). Developing and managing open organizations: A model and methods for maximizing organizational potential. Austin, Tx: Organization and Human Resource Development Assoc. Inc.

Morgan, G. (1986). Images of Organizations. Newbury Park: Sage

Musselwhite, E. & Moran, L. (1990). On the road to self-direction. Journal for Quality and Participation, June, 56-63.

Orsborn, J., Moran, L, Musselwhite, E. and Zenger, J. (1990). Self-directed work teams--The new American challenge. Business One Irwin.

Passmore, W.A. (1988). Designing effective organizations: The socio-technical system perspective. New York: Wiley

Pearce, J.A.,II. & Ravlin, E.C. (1987). The design and activation of self- regulating work groups. Human Relations, 40(11) 751-782.

Poza, E.J. & Markus, M.L. (1980). Success story: The team approach to work restructuring. Organizational Dynamics, Winter, 3-25.


BEST COPY AVAILABLE

# Employee Perceptions of Employee and Organizational Values in a State Department of Corrections

*Jennifer Gail Parsons*
*Oklahoma State University*

*William R. Venable*
*Oklahoma State University*

*Michael Dee Parsons*
*Arcadia, Oklahoma*

*Values drive individual and organizational performance. This study described employee perceptions of employee and organizational values in a state department of corrections. In-depth interviews were conducted with 19 randomly selected correctional officers, probation and parole officers, managers, and support personnel. Respondents reported perrsonal values emphasizing ethical behavior, family, and community, and service to others. Respondents reported organizational values as self-serving and unsupportive of employees. The resolution of organizational value in congruence may contribute to organizational productivity.*

The values of an organization and of its members can help to explain what it is, how it functions, and why it functions the way it does. "Values constitute a philosophical position about what the organization thinks is important. In a way, the values can be considered the organizational personality, and this can set one institution apart from another" (Caffarella and O'Donnell, 1987, p.4). "Values are the bedrock of any corporate culture" (Deal and Kennedy, 1982, p.21).

Abbarno illustrated the importance of values when considering the roles of individuals and the moral character that is portrayed by in their community lives. He noted that "your identity as a moral character permeates your conduct and establishes expectations among members of the community" (1993, p. 311). The values of an organization affect its performance. "Ethical people can be brought down by serving in a bad organization, just as people with questionable ethical integrity can be uplifted, or at least held in check, by serving in a good one" (Brown, 1987, p. 68).

Taylor pointed out that most of our ideas about work and organization were born in the Age of the Machine and do not apply in the Age of the Information Network. He also noted that understanding the promises and challenges of work in today's economy requires radically new models and metaphors that go beyond the stale rallying cries of teamwork or empowerment (1994). The core values of the workers are more important indicators of performance and must be identified and addressed. For purposes of this study a value is defined as a belief or principle which affects human behavior.

## Purpose

The purpose of this study was to describe employee perceptions of employee and organizational values in a state department of corrections.

## Research Questions

1. How do the employees describe their personal values?
2. How do the employees describe the values of their organization?
3. How do the employees compare their personal values to the values of their organization?

© *copyright, Parsons, Venable, Parsons, 1996*



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

**Methodology**

The research method utilized in this project was the in-depth interview. A research proposal was submitted to and approved by the state director of corrections. Two open ended, probing questions were developed to address each of three research questions. The questions were evaluated by a recognized expert in qualitative research.

Three correctional facilities were visited to conduct the interviews and sense the facilities' organizational environments. A sample pool was selected randomly by drawing four numbers from a hat. These numbers, four, seven, 14 and 19, were fed through the department's computer which carried an alpha list of employees. The selected individuals were written letters by a district supervisor who invited their voluntary participation. The selection and acceptance process took approximately three weeks because 18 probation and parole officers declined to be interviewed. Finally, 19 employees agreed to participate and all were interviewed.

The respondents were randomly selected from all of the major job categories in the department. There were four correctional officers, seven probation and parole officers, four members of management and four support personnel. Eight respondents were between the ages of 25 and 35, nine were between the ages of 36 and 45, and two were more than 45 years old. There were eight males and 11 females. There were ten whites and nine blacks. Thirteen were married and six were not. Sixteen were parents and three were not. Twelve were members of clubs or organizations and seven were not. Fifteen attended religious services and four did not.

Approximately two hours were spent with each of the 19 employees. The questions were read from the interview schedules. Notes were taken during the interviews in the event that the tape recorder failed, as it did on several occasions. Interviewees were given the opportunity to ask questions and share feelings regarding their general impressions about, or problems, with the study. Consent forms were reviewed and the nature of the study was presented.

Experienced employees tended to be mistrustful of the tape recorders and of personal questions about their work lives or personal lives. Several wondered if this process was a management spying effort. Even a district supervisor said that this study was feared to be a type of executive fact finding project for "digging up dirt" on certain employees.

In corrections there are a variety of roles, each with different responsibilities. With the great variations in how they deal with offenders, and the different approaches used to gain compliance from offenders, it became useful to understand the environments of the facilities. Differences in levels of cooperation and teamwork varied from facility to facility. The most tense and uncomfortable locations were the probation and parole offices. Employees at the incarcerating facilities seemed to be less adversarial with management, and happier and more relaxed overall. Strange as it may seem, stress and frustration seemed less noticeable inside prison walls than outside in the community supervision locations.

Prisons are more structured and less tolerant of rule violations. However, as a whole they are more congenial with regard to outsiders. Probation and parole officers seem to isolate themselves in their offices or spend their time in the "field." According to Smiley, Diana, Jasmine and Cliff, more than half of the probation officers and other staff members were taking Prozac or other mood elevators for depression. ( Probation and parole officers in this agency are required to carry firearms while on duty.) In addition, many employees were under psychiatric care.

Twelve weeks were needed to select participants and schedule and conduct interviews, as well as to analyze the data and report the findings. By using the in-depth qualitative methodology, it was possible to see subtle forms of body language and to read environmental issues like peer pressure placed on the interviewees not to participate. Often, probation officers would make remarks to discourage participation, such as, " This will end up in your jacket (i.e., personnel file), just you wait and see," or, "Remember, there is no such thing as confidentiality in the Department of Corrections (DOC)". These comments implied a lack of trust of anyone who appeared to be from management. The in-depth interview also provided the opportunity to explore the style and personality types of the respondents.

Other qualitative methods were considered. Participant observation would not have been appropriate for this study because perceptions cannot be interpreted from observations alone. Neither content analysis nor an historical approach were used because one-to-one contact with respondents was considered essential. Gaining an emic perspective was important in order to be able to sort out the truth


BEST COPY AVAILABLE

from the socially acceptable practice. Visual sociological methods were unavailable because regulations affecting offender confidentiality restricted participation in employee-offender interactions.

**Presentation and Analysis of Data**

The first research question was, "How do the employees describe their personal values?" The responses in descending order of frequency were family, honesty/loyalty, spirituality, responsibility, career, respect, happiness, integrity, caring for and helping others, openness, discipline, financial security, and retaining the middle-class American way of life, (See Table 1).

**Table 1** **Employee Personal Values**

| Family | Honesty/Loyalty | Spirituality | Responsibility | Career | Respect | Happiness | Integrity | Caring for Others | Helping Others | Openness | Discipline | Security | Retain Way of Life |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 17 | 16 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |

Henry said that "family is most important and I would sacrifice the job if necessary for family," and that "providing for my family is important and that is why I am motivated to keep my job." Honesty/Loyalty was the second most frequently reported value by employees. Sally said that "honesty is number one," and John agreed that "the most important values are honesty and loyalty, in that order." Henry said, "God is my number one priority with my family second and job third," which Ester agreed when she said that " God is most important and controls my life and I have a strong relationship with Him". Bambi commented about responsibility. "I think we are much more honest and responsible, but we don't care about money like those profit employees do". Raymond stated, "I give most of my all to the job". Career is important to Patrick, who said, "I come to work because my parents said to do the best job, regardless of what it is". Jane said, "I also value peace, my family, and just smelling the roses. It is important to me to be happy". To John, "honesty and integrity are the number one thing," while Ester used the following to describe the importance of integrity as a value ."I do not need supervision, as I will do my job because I believe I have a good work ethic." Henry said, "Before I go to work I pray that there will be someone who I can help." Many employees work in the DOC because they want to help others. Jane said, "I like to try to help people and I feel I am making a difference where I am at." Henry stated, "I get the ultimate rush when I am in a position to help others." Bambi said, "All of my life consists of taking care of people". Barry said, "It is also important to be thought of well by other people".

The second research question was, "How do the employees describe the values of their organization?" ( See Table 2).

**Table 2** **Employee Perceived Organizational Values**

| Protect Public | Public Image | Pander to Politicians | Self Protection | Dishonesty | Ignore the Powerless | Follow the Law | Rehabilitate Offenders | Rigidity | Benefit Management | Cultivated Confusion | Control Others |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 14 | 11 | 9 | 9 | 8 | 8 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 4 |

Most employees perceived the organizational values to be dishonest and self promoting. Characteristics of the organizational values included: dishonesty, protecting personal interests, preoccupation with public image, pandering to politicians, protecting the public, ignoring the powerless, preferential treatment for managers, following the law, rigidity, offender rehabilitation, cultivating confusion and controlling others. In terms of dishonesty, "personally, there are many times when they won't come right out and tell you to lie, but obviously that is what's expected" (Diana). Ester noted that the "department doesn't have honesty, or importance for family". "When line officers have family problems they get little support, and depending on the supervisor may be stressed further by refusing to cooperate with schedules, limit leave, possible audit of your cases while you are gone, or schedule an audit the first few days you return, something of that nature" (Diana). "If you make the wrong people mad, then you'll find yourself working for the boss from hell" (Diana).

The agency is seen as one in which "work becomes more important than the person", according to Priscilla. As Diana states, "Upper management's family is quite important. However, as far as line staff and their issues, they rank far down the list of priorities." Other similar comments were made like, "Independent thinking is not supported or encouraged at all" (Lucy). William stated, "I find my position most difficult, especially when I have to sell something to the staff that I don't believe in." John was concerned about promotion practices when he stipulated that "it appears promotions are given to individuals because of race or sex because of the department's need to cover their backside rather than pick the best individual for the job." Sometimes it is important for individuals to be understood. However, that is not always done, or so says Henry. "Understanding is not as important to management" (Cliff).

Sally pointed out that the "DOC puts on a rosy picture for the public about how we are dealing with offenders". Smiley says that the DOC wants the employee to "put on a good show for the public and the politicians." Nancy was even more clear when she said, "I have learned very well that the number one most valuable and important concern is that of the media's view of our work competence. This organization lives to cover their butt with the public." "The upper management is more concerned with appearances than what really gets done sometimes. They worry about what the public and the politicians think," said Suzanne.

Nancy noted, "When the organization stresses the mission statement 'to protect the public, employees and the offender', most employees chuckle. The only true protection going on around here is that of covering ass." Looking good in public is the "basic value of survival which is accomplished by keeping media off the agency back" (John). Pleasing politicians is perceived as one of the values of the organization in a comment made by Diana and echoed by Smiley and Cliff. "I think this job is highly political." To Cliff, the DOC "manipulates the community by fear." Ignoring the powerless is a concern of the employees. "The job is difficult because administration doesn't support the front line" (Patrick).

Many actions benefit management. "Training is provided to some more than others", and "they have a select group which they choose to protect or not protect which will enhance their career" (Diana). "'Fulfill the law' is the number one value of the organization", according to Ester. Cliff believed that fulfillment of the law referred to " a neighborhood of individuals that are not threatening to others".

Rehabilitation was a value expressed by Suzanne. "I would hope that rehabilitating the inmates is important." Rigidity was expressed in a statement by William about his supervisor. "She will give feedback but will not allow for disagreement with her". Management is seen as more concerned about taking care of themselves than the agency. "They don't care about quality. They make us use stationery that the Governor's name is misspelled on because we have reams left over" (Lucy). The exercise of power and control over others was highlighted with statements like; "She has forced more out of me than many supervisors. Failure could get you a hit by the bat" (William). "The DOC likes power" (Henry). Regarding community safety, Henry said, "It is important for the public-sector employees and employers to provide security for the community", and "Values of the public sector are more for protection of society." Referring to the DOC, John said that "it is a service driven agency to try to impact society and change it."

An environment of cultivated confusion was implied by several statements. Eighty percent of the respondents saw the organizational structure set up to elicit a "Them versus Us Attitude." William contended that the DOC "keeps the staff in kind of an uproar." And contributing to that effort was the perception that "values change from director to director, legislature to legislature, and Governor to Governor" (William). The DOC has "transitory values" (Lucy).

The third research question was, "How do the employees compare their personal values to the values of the organization?" (See Table 3).

**Table 3 Perceived Congruence of Employee and Organizational Values**

| Share Values | Do Not Share Values | Unsure |
|---|---|---|
| 4 | 14 | 1 |

Respondents were asked how their own values compared to the values of their organization. Approximately three-quarters of the employees communicated organizational values which were substantially different from their own. Twenty percent identified values which were relatively congruent with those of the department. Jennifer said, "My values are more similar than dissimilar".The responses further indicated that the employees saw themselves differently from the organization in that they that felt their value systems were substantially different.

According to Patrick, "The administration is out of control and there are always vindictive measures if you stand up for your own principles". " My skills have been eroded and I am depressed", said Cliff. Smiley said that it is "almost depressing to have to go to work." The organizational values could be summarized as power and control, maintaining the status quo, projecting a favorable appearance, not caring about the average employee, and devaluing input from the rank and file.

The conflict in values could be seen in Diana's remark, "I have to almost leave my personal values at home because there is so much disparity between my personal values and the departmental values". Lucy said that she was "a loyal employee to the organization but find myself at great odds with the agency." John stated that his values and the department's values were "not very compatible a lot of times." William felt that the top managers "don't get the input from all of the people that they need to, especially the ones that are affected by the decision". Sally felt that there was a major conflict when she

tried to do her job and could not because she saw the "conflict between DOC and her values in removing offenders from the community." Cliff felt that there were definite "conflicts of interests," that the goal of management was to "be deceptive at all times." Jasmine felt that "my values are better than the organization's because I am caring toward the little people." There were substantial indicators of conflict between employee values and their perceptions of the organizational values. To suggest that this conflict was totally the fault of the organization would understate the complexity of the situation. However, the respondents felt that the primary responsibility for the incongruence of values rested within the agency.

**Discussion**

The personal values of the interviewed employees can be placed into three groups by frequency. Nearly all (16 and 17 out of 19) identified family and honesty and loyalty. Between five and seven people mentioned each of the values of spirituality, responsibility, respect, happiness, career, integrity, caring for and helping others. Three individuals identified discipline, financial security, and retaining traditional American values and opportunities.

These values are heavily oriented toward ethical behavior, the building of community, and service to others. The emphasis upon self oriented issues like career and financial security was relatively low.

The values which the respondents perceived to be held by the organization were, by contrast, primarily self serving and unsupportive of employees. Only "protect the public," "follow the law," and "rehabilitation of the offender" did not appear to be self-serving. "Protect the public" constitutes the first three words of the department's mission statement and might have been expected to have been identified by all. And "rehabilitate the offender," identified by only one fourth of the employees, is the public's general perception of a primary purpose of the department.

An organization with incongruent values can respond in various ways. It can ignore the incongruence or pretend that it does not exist. It can confront the problem directly and attempt to modify the values of the employees and/or of the organization in order to bring them into closer alignment. Or, it can remove and replace either the employees or the organization's key decision makers with persons whose values are more compatible with the values of the other entity.

Unfortunately, many organizations avoid dealing directly with value incongruence by distracting themselves with organizational re-engineering, team management, total quality management and other such "deck chair rearrangement" training programs which shuffle titles, duties, and/or activities. They wonder why their programs do not transform the organizations. The answer may be that they do not work because they fail to address the basic values and belief systems which drive organizations and workers to do the things they do much more forcefully than activity or role based programs can modify.

The incongruence of values may be one of the most overlooked performance related problems in organizations today.

**References**

Abbarno, J. M. (1993). Role Responsibility and Values. The Journal of Value Inquiry 27 305-316.

Bambi (1995). Values Interview, Conducted by: Jennifer Gail Parsons, Oklahoma City.

Barry (1995). Values Interview, Conducted by: Jennifer Gail Parsons, Oklahoma City.

Brown, A. (1987). Is Ethics Good Business. Personal Administrator 32, 67-70.

Caffarella, R. S., and O'Donnell, J. M. (1987). The Culture of Adult Education Institutions. Life-Long learning: An Omnibus of Practice and Research. 11, 4-6.

Cliff (1995). Values Interview, Conducted by: Jennifer Gail Parsons, Oklahoma City.

Deal, T. E., and Kennedy, A. A. (1982). *Corporate Cultures*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Diana (1995). Values Interview, Conducted by: Jennifer Gail Parsons, Oklahoma City.

Ester (1995). Values Interview, Conducted by: Jennifer Gail Parsons, Oklahoma City.

Gilbert, T.F. (1978). A Leisurely Look at Worthy Performance. In Human Competence. New

York: McGraw Hill.

Guy, A. (1991). The Role of Aristotle's *praxis* today. The Journal of Value Inquiry. 25, 287-289.

Henry (1995). Values Interview, Conducted by: Jennifer Gail Parsons, Oklahoma City.

Jane (1995). Values Interview, Conducted by: Jennifer Gail Parsons.

Jasmine (1995). Values Interview, Conducted by: Jennifer Gail Parsons, Oklahoma City.

Jennifer (1995). Values Interview, Conducted by: Jennifer Gail Parsons, Oklahoma City.

John (1995). Values Interview, Conducted by: Jennifer Gail Parsons, Oklahoma City.

Lucy (1995). Values Interview, Conducted by: Jennifer Gail Parsons, Oklahoma City.

Nancy (1995). Values Interview, Conducted by: Jennifer Gail, Parsons, Oklahoma City.

Patrick (1995). Values Interview, Conducted by: Jennifer Gail Parsons, Oklahoma City.

Priscilla (1995). Values Interview, Conducted by, Jennifer Gail Parsons, Oklahoma City.

Raymond (1995). Values Interview, Conducted by: Jennifer Gail Parsons, Oklahoma City.

Sally (1995). Values Interview, Conducted by: Jennifer Gail Parsons, Oklahoma City.

Smiley (1995). Values Interview, Conducted by: Jennifer Gail Parsons, Oklahoma City.

Suzanne (1995). Values Interview, conducted by: Jennifer Gail Parsons, Oklahoma City.

William (1995). Values Interview, Conducted by: Jennifer Gail Parsons, Oklahoma City.